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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000257

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR EUR/SE, IO/UNP

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SUBJECT: CYPRUS: UN ENVOY SHARES REPORTING PLAN DETAILS

REF: NICOSIA 193

Classified By: Ambassador Frank C. Urbancic, Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The UN Good Offices Mission on Cyprus (UNGO) will orally brief the Security Council on/about April 30, Special Adviser Alexander Downer informed the Ambassador on April 9. While the report will present a reasonably positive account of negotiations progress so far, it also will hint that UN peacekeeping assets are in short supply worldwide, a warning that UNFICYP's continuing presence on the island is not a given. Downer did not favor formal discussion of changes to the force's mandate in the upcoming UNFICYP report or June rollover, however, reckoning that that exercise was better tackled in December. Reiterating his earlier opinion, he claimed that the naming of a U.S. Cyprus Coordinator would not contribute meaningfully to a solution and might even derail progress in the short-term. Regarding confidence-building measures (CBMs), the UN envoy confirmed news that leaders Demetris Christofias and Mehmet Ali Talat would announce the implementation of two measures after their April 10 meeting. Efforts to open the Limnitis Buffer Zone (BZ) crossing remained stalled, however, owing mainly to G/C negotiator George Iacovou's refusal to accept a UN-brokered compromise. END SUMMARY.

Travel Plans Firming Up

¶2. (C) Between April 9 meetings with the Cypriot leaders and dinner with the EU, UN Special Adviser on Cyprus Alexander Downer provided the Ambassador a 75-minute readout of his recent activities and future plans. He started by discussing his upcoming oral report to the UN Security Council (he does not plan to submit a written report). Downer intended to arrive in New York on April 28 for consultations, and would present his briefing to the Council on April 30 or May 1. The British were handling the logistical details with the Secretariat, he noted. Downer was still mulling details, but he thought the report would recount UNGO developments reasonably positively, noting the good atmospherics between the leaders and progress inked so far but also establishing that significant challenges remained. Deeper in the remarks -- but aiming to send a clear message nonetheless -- would be Downer's admonition that growing geopolitical instability made competition fierce for UN peacekeepers. Their deployment to Cyprus, whose conflict was anything but hot, must be continually evaluated. He welcomed the Ambassador's intention to collaborate with local UK High Commissioner Peter Millett in preparing building blocks for a Council Presidency statement that Downer hoped would follow the UNGO presentation.

Stronger Message in December, Not June

13. (C) Turning next to UNFICYP's twice-yearly written report, to be prepared in May and endorsed by the Security Council in June, Downer predicted its format would hew closely to past examples. Even with Good Offices presenting a separate oral message to the Council, it still would contain political observations, and he and UNFICYP chief Taye-Brook Zerihoun would collaborate closely in its preparation. Downer did not believe it appropriate to refer to changes to UNFICYP's mandate and/or a more frequent rollover in the written report and/or accompanying UNSCR that endorsed it this time around. That discussion should occur in the November/December iteration, when he would have greater clarity of where the settlement process was headed. In this go-round, the mandate discussions should instead be informal, with a six-month technical rollover following. Nonetheless, UN staff in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) already had begun a white paper-type exercise on the future of UNFICYP, Downer allowed.

14. (C) He believed it vital to keep the Russians fully involved in the UNFICYP/UNGO discussions and as "on board" as possible. One of the reasons the 2004 Annan Plan had failed was Russia's feeling that the U.S. and UK had marginalized its role; Moscow thus had been all too willing to carry the G/Cs' water in opposing the plan in the Council. Downer acknowledged the Russians' wont of late to echo G/C talking points on Cyprus, meaning that convincing them to speak and act constructively would prove difficult. The French seemed less willing to support Greek Cypriot positions without question, Downer offered, complimenting the even-handedness of local French Ambassador Nicolas Galey. And Paris,

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reportedly aiming to scale back UN PKO deployments worldwide, might not oppose changes to UNFICYP. (Note: Our impressions of Galey are not as favorable. At meetings of the local P-5, he defends G/C positions almost as strongly as his Russian counterpart.)

Still No Love for Envoy Idea

15. (C) The UN envoy remains opposed to the nomination of a U.S. Cyprus coordinator. While the appointment might please Turkish Cypriots, Downer explained, it would "scare the horses" in the G/C camp and, on balance, upset the process. He had discussed the possibility of a U.S. coordinator nomination with AKEL Secretary General and close Christofias confidant Andros Kyprianou that same day, and Kyprianou had called it a bad idea. Downer also shared a second-hand account that UK Foreign Secretary David Miliband had informed the Secretary that Britain did not intend to name a high-level envoy, mainly because he (Downer) had advised against it.

Picture Not All Black on CBMs

16. (C) Details remained sketchy regarding the status of the proposed Limnitis BZ crossing, Downer admitted. An April 8 meeting with Iacovou had shed no light, but he hoped to gain greater clarity from his April 10 meeting with Christofias. On the bright side, Talat had assured Downer that the Turkish military was prepared to accept the latest UN compromise, which involved the Greek Cypriots supplying electricity to the nearby Turkish Cypriot military enclave at Kokkina/Erenkoy. Interestingly, the T/C leader had viewed favorably Christofias's reported referral of the arrangement to the RoC National Council. Talat thought the RoC president was attempting to put his political rivals on the spot, daring them to oppose a deal that would allow the politically popular crossing to open.

17. (C) G/C negotiator George Iacovou was holding up progress on Limnitis and the other CBMs, Downer ventured. The vain (Downer's characterization) and often cranky (ours) septuagenarian remained upset that the Turks/TCs allegedly had broken an earlier gentlemen's agreement to open Limnitis without strings; seeking payback, he was erecting all types of roadblocks on CBM progress, usually citing his opposition to "upgrading" the "illegal TRNC." Iacovou had relented on allowing free ambulance passage through the BZ and on measures to improve law enforcement cooperation between the sides, however. Downer expected these CBMs to be announced after the leaders' April 10 meeting. (Note: Talat told the Ambassador on April 10 that the agreement on law enforcement was "historic.")

Comment

18. (C) Less than four weeks ago, Downer's private message on the upcoming UNFICYP report and rollover resolution rang harsher than today. "UNFICYP's continuation should definitely be in play in the upcoming (May/June) deliberations" he asserted to us on March 19, adding that the international community ought to use the discussions in New York to "inject some uncertainty" into the minds of Cypriots (reftel). Why the more restrained view now, with the real UNFICYP crunch time put off until December? Perhaps it is because moves on UNFICYP, which undoubtedly would shake up G/Cs, mostly would be met with yawns by Turkish Cypriots, who consider the Turkish Army their true source of security on the island. It follows, then, that the international community should play this card only if Greek Cypriots clearly are the intransigent party in the talks. Iacovou's blockage of the CBMs aside, the current reality is not nearly so black-and-white, so Downer's newfound hesitance in firing the UNFICYP bullet strikes us as reasonable.
Urbancic